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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 15, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 15, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

CUMHURIYET / ZAMAN / RADIKAL / SABAH / HURRIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Van Centennial University Rector denied all the charges placed against him during the statement he gave to the court. "I did not engage in intelligence efforts, nor did I use this information against people or shared them with others. I did not engage in any discriminatory actions based on racial and religious concerns, and I did not establish an organizational circle," said Askin. After the judge, who favored the release of Askin during his trial, was "instantly" replaced by another judge upon the demand of the intervening attorneys, the court decided that Askin should stay under arrest. A small group of people protested the CHP (Republican People's Party) deputies who came to Van to attend the court session. Meanwhile, an intervening attorney claimed that Enver Arpali, the deputy General Secretary of Van Centennial University, did not commit suicide in November, but was murdered in his prison cell in order to prevent disclosing of crucial information by Arpali.

OZGUR GUNDEM: 1,590 people signed 102 petitions demanding mother tongue education and submitted them to the Turkish Parliament. Petition Commission of the Parliament sent these petitions to the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education announced that no further action can be taken since the demand placed was against the clauses of the Turkish Constitution and these clauses were unalterable. The Commission notified the citizens that those demands in the petition which were deemed beneficial to the public by the commission and which required lawmaking were conveyed to the lawmakers.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Four hundred wells to extract fuel that has leaked (from unspecified sources) have reportedly been dug up to date by people in Batman's Toptancilar Sitesi quarter despite the area being the site of a May 3, 2004 pressurized gas blast. Three people were killed and 23 people were wounded as a result of the blast then. There had been a period of inactivity following the blast among people and many people fearing for their lives left the quarter; however, some of them returned and reestablished well digging businesses to extract fuel.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Police conducted separate raids on the Istanbul-based premise of the Ulkede Ozgur Gundem newspaper and its printing center, and searched these places under authorization of the Van Heavy Penalty Court. Chief Publishing Director of the newspaper said that this development should be deemed a blow to freedom of expression.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Fifty-six mayors, including the Diyarbakir, Tunceli, Hakkari, Batman and Sirnak Municipalities, will reportedly join the ranks of the DTP (Democratic Society Party) with a ceremony to be held on December 16 in Diyarbakir.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Diyarbakir Chapter of Human Rights Association held a seminar called "Do you know your rights?" in a quarter of the Diyarbakir province.

OZGUR GUNDEM: A Women's Association called "Kircicegi" (Wildflower) opened in the Kucukdikili township of Adana. The association aims to find solutions to women's psychological and social problems.

ZAMAN / RADIKAL / SABAH: If diplomatic efforts put forth to counter the founding of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq reaches a deadlock, [the Turkish Army should] "appear at the Qandil Mountains [in northern Iraq] one night," said the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) leader Devlet Bahceli.

RADIKAL: A Women's Park will be opened in Diyarbakir today. A 3-meter tall monument has been erected in the park which depicted the stories of seven women who were victims of violence in seven different parts of the world. The monument was erected with joint efforts of Baglar Municipality and International Amnesty Organization.

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